

TRANSIT TASK FORCE PUBLIC FORUM - SPEAKERS LIST

September 30, 2015 - COB, 3rd Floor Council Hearing Room

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Nancy Abeles
Bethesda Crest HOA
Comments to the Montgomery County Executive's Transit Task Force
Public Forum, September 30, 2015

My name is Nancy Abeles and I represent Bethesda Crest HOA. Additionally I sit on the Bethesda BRAC's Integration Committee, the 355 BRT Corridor Citizen's Advisory Committee, and the COG's Transportation Planning Board's Citizens Advisory Committee. I have been following zoning, redevelopment, and transit changes in the local region for about a decade. Having sat in on Task Force meetings this summer as an interested party as connected to the 355 BRT CAC, I regret to report to the public why their recommendations fail to fulfill Executive Leggett's request for broader input and a full range of revenue options.

So flummoxed was one Task Force member by the gap between the group's stated mission and their actual discussions and proceedings that she asked via email, *"Based on last night's discussion, I'm confused about the ultimate goal. Are we supposed to recommend a specific financing plan or options?"* The answer was "a specific plan," because this Task Force is commandeered by an inner core group with a set agenda that duplicates their 2012 report. They squelched due diligence and discussion even from their own outer ranks, who essentially became window dressing.

The core members ignored regional priorities to maintain and enhance existing transit infrastructure that forms the backbone of the region's economy. In an arrogant affront to taxpayers who already shoulder a heavy burden, they promote a stratospheric purchase of additional, technologically backward infrastructure, despite challenging new County budget gaps and a fragile regional, national, and global economy. Worse, a looming potential federal government shutdown could cause hardship to all regional employment sectors and locales.

The core remained deaf to discussion about nationally recognized ITAs that overhauled urban transit systems using straightforward gap analysis from direct community input to design flexible, dynamic solutions with the most cost-effective results. They failed to examine local ITAs like that of Northern Virginia, which exemplifies best practices, or WMATA, which provides

painful lessons learned. Nor did they consult locally-based, national expert resources like the Transportation Research Board, which compares transit tax revenue mechanisms.

The core rejected interface with their own BRT project's Citizens Advisory Committees. They want to restrict these groups from discussing costs or funding, which are both components of Implementation Alternatives' decisions. Preliminary studies indicate that the Task Force's preferred version of BRT won't match ridership levels to justify required financial investment. But the Task Force recently proclaimed that the ITA should control system design. Design, however, is already underway, using the reality tests and community stakeholder feedback the core members strategically omitted from their original report and tried to repress throughout the CAC formation process at the Executive's Rapid Transit Steering Committee meetings.

Regional transit planning derives from Council of Government projections. The COG can predict population and job growth but can't foresee real estate development that is decided in reality by human behavior and market affordability, rather than developer project branding. I have heard COG experts admit that the Districts' comeback wasn't on their radar and took them completely by surprise. But this Task Force, as if they had godly powers, asserts that development will unfold in a proscribed way to justify their proposed form of BRT. So they performed no debt risk analysis nor considered how, if the tax base doesn't grow as planned, default could impact existing taxpayers. Nor did they do a comparison matrix between ITA and municipal funding, which is what taxpayers and the County Council most need to see.

The purpose of an ITA is not to tax but to ensure coherent, coordinated, and cost effective regional planning, say experts like Jonathan Halpern, U.S. Treasury Infrastructure Finance Advisor, a former World Bank Lead Analyst/Economist for Infrastructure, and Infrastructure Economics professor at Georgetown University. He is a County resident and I consulted him on the Task Force's recommendations. He predicts this ITA's BRT will result in large gaps, overlaps, and rigidities. The proposed ITA exemplifies what he terms the "tendency for executing agencies to push their favored projects, skewing to planning studies to suit their interests (often "bigger is better") without regard to cost effectiveness across modal and intermodal choices."

To summarize: Transit is about connectivity, but this Task Force refuses to "connect the dots."

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Testimony in Favor of ITA Legislation to Build BRT
September 30, 2015

Good evening. I am Tina Slater and I live in Silver Spring. I'd like to quote something that was said back in 2012 and still holds true, or truer, today.

"A rapid transit network is perhaps the single most practical and cost-effective alternative in solving our significant transportation capacity problems, and relieving not only current but future congestion. Gridlock is rampant and it's hurting our economy, our safety, and our quality of life. That is why we need to invest in alternative transportation on the scale that will really make a difference to our residents and employers."

This is a quote from Ike Leggett.

Whether to spend funds on roadway expansion or on building BRT is, at its core, a question of whether we should prioritize moving cars or moving **people**.

The average car is 15 feet long. The average BRT vehicle is 83 feet long. This means you can fit six cars in the same linear space as a single BRT vehicle. With six cars you are likely moving only six people. With one BRT vehicle you can move anywhere from 80 to 120 people.

Yes we have bus service today, but the buses are stuck in the same lanes as cars and often stop at every block. The slow speeds and infrequent arrival time do not make this kind of bus service very appealing to riders who have an alternative. Effective BRT requires giving buses street-space so they can operate in their own exclusive lanes. Effective BRT requires frequent arrival of buses.

When we focus solely on the needs of drivers, we risk forgetting other residents of our county who do not own or drive cars --- these are people who cannot drive because of old age, youth, infirmity, disabilities or economic situation. By continuing to focus on services for drivers, we are neglecting a large portion of our county's population.

The key goals of our public policy should be to serve the most people fairly. Just as we ask the greater population to fund public schools even if they do not have children, or even if their children are grown and no longer attend these schools, we too must fund public transportation for all our residents.

Passing Independent Transportation Authority legislation is the way to move expeditiously on these goals.

Thank you,

Tina Slater
402 Mansfield Rd.
Silver Spring, MD 20910-5515
301-585-5038
Slater.tina@gmail.com

My name is Kevin Harris and I reside at 10306 Edgewood Avenue. I'm testifying in my role as Chairman of the Greater Four Corners Alliance. I am a member of the BRT Citizens Advisory Committee for Route 29 South, a former Senior Planner for COG, secretary of my sons PTSA and own a catering business in the County. I am here tonight to urge you to not to support potential legislation that would enable the creation of an ITA.

The first reason I'm urging to you to oppose this is that there has been no data presented that would demonstrate that a BRT would solve the congestion problems we are facing. The study is still in the conceptual stage, not close to presenting alternatives or the engineering details necessary to provide defined cost estimates, so your proposal to finance this is by breaking the voter approved Charter limits is extremely premature. I have sat through 4 Citizens Advisory Committee meetings over the last 5 months, and we still have not been presented with the most basic traffic data, including the # of daily trips and any information about the destinations of drivers. Any observer can see that most of the traffic flowing south in the morning rush hour is destined for the beltway, which means that none of these drivers would be candidates for taking the BRT. What data has been presented to the Task Force by Sage Consultants is completely implausible. They have projected a net increase of over 39,000 jobs at the White Oak Science Gateway based on a maximum build out of over 13 million square feet of possible commercial space. This comes at the same time as the owners of the property are openly lowering commercial development estimates, have requested that the majority of the first phase of development be residential, and cannot at this stage identify one commercial tenant for the site. This wildly irresponsible modeling casts doubts on the validity of the entire report.

Second, the County does not have a strong enough track record in maintaining existing infrastructure to be entrusted with building 5 transit projects in addition to coordinating the Purple Line construction with the State. My neighborhood was scheduled for a full HMA paving this summer but I was recently told that it had been postponed until next year because there were complications with paving the Hillandale neighborhood. How can the County Executive come to the taxpayers with a proposal to spend \$4 billion worth of new transit projects when they can't even pave 2 neighborhoods in one summer?

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Thirdly, the County needs to attend to the pressing matters at hand - namely education - that will lead to greater economic growth for the County. This past year the Council cut \$36 million from k-12 education which resulted in the elimination of 380 positions. Almost at the same time, Governor Hogan announced that he would support a scaled back Purple Line but only if Montgomery and Prince George's County kicked in an additional \$50 million each. In response, our County Executive said that of course we could work out those "details." He subsequently announced that there would likely be a significant property tax increase of 10-11% next year just to keep existing spending levels. That 10% increase does not include funding an ITA to build a Bus Rapid Transit system so your proposed additional special taxes would be on top of that increase.

Let's begin with the details of paving the streets we have and educating our children before we incur \$4 billion in debt for transit projects that have not been substantiated with hard data. The residents of the County could not have spoken more clearly when they amended the Charter in 1990 and reaffirmed in 2010 to limit the amount of annual property tax increases. I'm requesting that you respect the voters decision and oppose this blatant attempt to circumvent the spending limits set forth in the Charter.

Jerry Garson

September 30, 2015

I am Jerry Garson the Transportation Chairman of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. The question posed to our residents and businesses are. **Can the residents and business in Montgomery County afford all the proposed Capital costs of \$2.2 Billion to partially build four routes?**

The projection in the Transportation Task Force Report is that this will cost the residents and businesses \$5.7 billion through 2046. These proposals will result in significant increases in real estate taxes probably well over the 7% stated in the report.

We do not know what the interest rate was used for these 30 year bonds. This should be disclosed in advance of any proposal being introduced in the State Legislature.

No costs are shown for Phase 2 of the Corridor Cities Transit way or the additional Bus Rapid Transit lines as contained in the Master Plans.

The question that needs to be answered is what are the total costs and the related benefits to the current residents. A full analysis has not been performed. For example the plan does not appear to provide for replacement buses over the next 30 years or even recognize that the agency's budget has administrative overhead costs for which funding is required.

The real question is how many jobs and business will the County lose over the next 10 to 20 years, if the BRT system is built. In the last 10 years the county lost 3,325 jobs according to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. With Amazon and other on line merchants taking over a significant amount of retail sales, we ask how many retail jobs will we lose, not gain along Route 355 during the next 30 years.

Elimination of some left turns on Rockville Pike will discourage shoppers, result in more congestion and pollution by forcing vehicles to loop around to reach destinations, and will lead to the elimination of hundreds of business and the probable loss of well over 20,000 jobs. Traffic has decreased over much of Route 355 over the last 10 years per SHA.

The sketch provided by the Rockville City Government shows that there will be room for 2 vehicles to make a left turn in each light cycle or 30 vehicles per hour. on MD 355. Left turns at other intersections would be prohibited with the BRT

constructed along the median. This will help eliminate a large number of businesses on MD Route 355 between now and 2040.

Some easier and cheaper alternatives are possible.

One provide free Ride On bus services, which would provide more mobility and cost less than 10% of the cost of the proposed BRT lines. The costs last year would have been \$22 million. Next year it probably would be \$ 23 million. This is the amount of fare contribution made by Ride On riders.

Let WMATA provide express bus services on Viers Mill Road and US 29 at no direct cost to the County. Since WMATA is starting these enhanced express use services by June 2016, this is both more affordable and a more immediate solution rather than waiting 5 to 10 years that BRT requires. Also implement MD 355 Ride On Plus Transit Service on MD 355 at a cost of \$21 million if the \$17 million is not provided by a TIGER grant.

We do not understand where the ridership projections come from. Currently WMATA Red Line serves 10,492 riders between Bethesda and Shady Grove each weekday in both directions. Ride On 46 serves 3,415 riders per weekday between Rockville and Medical Center and Ride On 55 serves 7,650 riders per weekday between Germantown Transit Center and Rockville.

How are we going to see these 2 BRT routes on MD Route 355 that will have capacity of over 60,000 riders per day have sufficient number of riders to justify 5 minute peak and 10 minute non peak ridership.

Currently 22 of the 78 Ride On buses do not meet these service requirements and could be eliminated.

Or as soon as it starts, will the county start eliminating services, since most buses will have less than 10 riders per trip. The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy's 2012 Market and Demand Study warned the County that pursuing this course of action will surely doom the BRT efforts and insure a backlash by County residents and businesses who will be saddled with an onerous debt burden for an obviously underutilized transit service.

Thank you for your time.

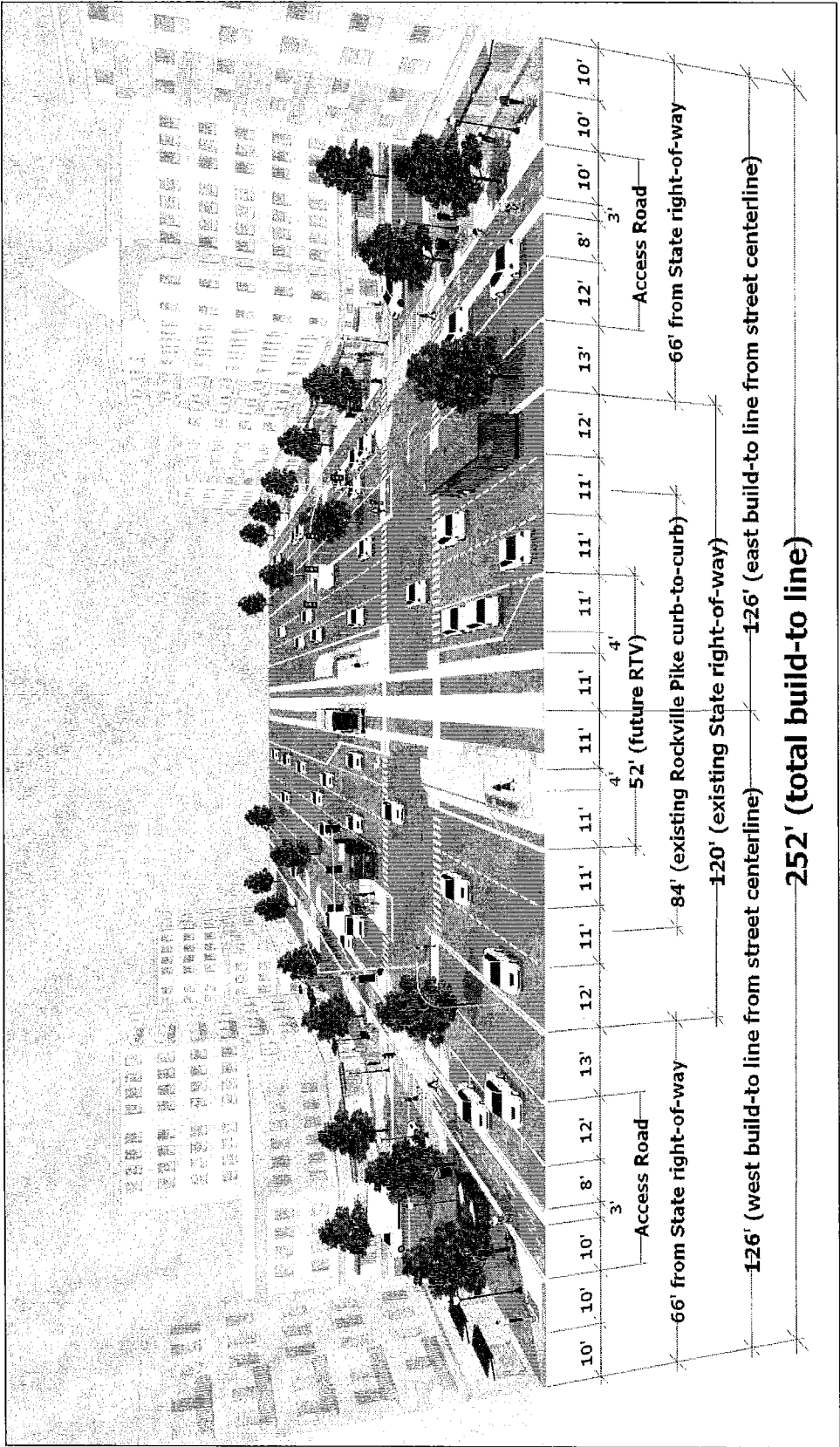


Figure 4.3: Typical Multi-Way Boulevard Street Section

Montgomery County Civic Federation Testimony
County Executive Isiah Leggett's Transit Task Force Public Hearing
September 30, 2015
Paula Bienenfeld
President, Montgomery County Civic Federation

As president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation I am honored to represent over 150,000 residents throughout Montgomery County. All of our members live in Montgomery County. And we all vote.

This is the third time you have required us to miss dinner and our families, and to leave work early at financial cost to us, to attend a hearing that has been scheduled for your convenience rather than our county residents, to say no to the ITA and the BRT. Let's hope it's the last.

Bottom line: the residents of this county do not want an Independent Transit Authority and they do not want a 'Bus Rapid Transit' system. We do want fiscally conservative responsible approaches to the issue of failing traffic intersections, increasing dangers to pedestrians and bicyclists, and lack of public transit where it is needed.

We are in the process of compiling results from a questionnaire we sent to our members regarding the ITA and BRT. So far over 50% of our member organizations have responded. Here are the results to date.

- 96% of respondents' neighborhoods are within 1/2 mile of Ride-On Transit.
- 92% of respondents said they do not support creating an Independent Transit Authority for Montgomery County
- 92% do not support breaking the voter approved Charter limits without a voter referendum, in order to pay for this mega project that has yet to be justified to residents.
- 78% support improving existing systems and the majority of respondents support providing free Ride On Service.

The Civic Federation has carefully studied these issues, as led by Jerry Garson, our Transportation Committee chair and members of our Transportation Committee. As requested by Mr. Leggett we analyzed the suggested need for additional publicly-funded transit, and we recommend that, in keeping with 21st-century technology, knowledge, and realistic population and ridership requirements, any new public transit must keep to the important principle of flexibility. That is, a diesel bus fixed-route system is not acceptable in the 21st century, given changed cultural expectations and available technologies. We refer to V2V technologies; autonomous vehicles, including transit; transportation flexibility apps, and the like. This ecosystem is the one we are entering now. And, I don't think I need to go into what we have learned about 'clean diesel' in the last few weeks.

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In response to Mr. Leggett's request to our organization, this is what the Civic Federation recommends and which we'll elaborate on in a report which Mr. Leggett requested from the Civic Federation.

- **Implement free RideOn services in Montgomery County** with a review of, and changes to, the current routes to make them more direct and to reflect current ridership patterns.
- **Implement the 'MD 355 Ride On Plus (ROP) Transit Improvements** as proposed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- **Utilize the free Express Bus Service as proposed by WMATA** scheduled for implementation by June 2016 on Veirs Mill Road (Bus No. Q9), with 10 stops, similar to the 10 stops proposed for the BRT
- **Utilize the free Express Bus Service proposed by WMATA** on US 29 (Bus Nos. Z9 and Z29), scheduled for implementation by June 2016 similar to the BRT stops proposed by County Executive Leggett and his appointed TTF
- **Implement an improved flexible, responsive bus transit system** by changing routes in response to the location of demand, as was done recently in Houston, Texas, at almost no cost to the taxpayers or local businesses.
- **Support Bridj**, which is a private, independent flexible public bus transit system, and which will be introduced in Montgomery County
- **Prepare for autonomous vehicles**, which will radically change our public transit needs within the next decade.
- **Implement real time computer traffic signalization** control and/or adaptive signal technology to reduce congestion.
- **Implement traffic demand management** (incentives to reduce congestion); and,
- **Institute a community transportation planning process** to engage neighborhood residents in documenting transportation needs, holistic planning for the future, and greening our transportation system.

To my fellow residents I want to make sure you are all aware that MC-DOT has already done a real estate evaluation of properties along the proposed routes, in advance of a 'quick take' of property to extend the roadbed to the full width of the right-of-way. In some areas, the right-of-way will be extended. I would urge you to contact the DOT to find out where your property stands regarding the 'quick take.'

Thank you.

September 30, 2015
Transit Task Force Public Forum

Good evening, I am Carole Ann Barth and I live at 10602 Lockridge Drive, Silver Spring. I wanted to write testimony cataloging the many capital costs the Task Force excluded in order to keep construction costs down to \$2.5 billion, the ludicrously optimistic projections of benefits which were never subjected to any independent expert analysis, and the complete lack of performance metrics for the BRT and the ITA. But why bother? I already know you don't care about any of that--so let me tell you a story instead.

Once upon a time, not so long ago, in a land not so far away, the people were sad, because they had inefficient and unreliable transit, un-maintained roads, and antiquated traffic signals. Now the rulers of this land had squeezed all the taxes they could from the people, and had also borrowed as much money as they could. "Where shall we find new tax revenues?" they cried. "We know", said some piggies. "We will build magical mixed-use palaces and jobs will become plentiful in the land. Yea, even white tablecloth restaurants will we build."

But these were greedy piggies, and they said, "We will build the palaces and gain all the profit, but the people and the small businesses must pay for all the needed infrastructure. We must convince the people they have no choice". Some sleek weasels who were feasting on crumbs from the piggies' table said "We can fool the people for you."

So the piggies and weasels told the people they must build a world class, gold standard, transformative system of giant oxcarts or there would be no new jobs or white table restaurants in all the land. And the rulers said, this seems good to us, but alas we have maxed out our credit cards. So the piggies and weasels hatched a scheme to indenture the people for 30 years to a cabal of unelected evil wizards. Everything seemed to be going the piggies' way.

But the people said, "This is taxation without representation! We don't want transformative giant oxcarts, we want to invest in the future of transportation. We want affordable, efficient, and reliable transit on re-paved roads. We want realtime adaptive traffic signals and free local bus service."

"You can't have that!" said the piggies. So the people had a piggye roast, and lived happily ever after.



Coalition for Smarter Growth

DC • MD • VA

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Testimony to Transit Task Force Regarding 9/16/15 Draft Proposal

By Pete Tomao, Montgomery County Advocacy Manager

September 30, 2015

I am Pete Tomao the Montgomery County Advocacy Manager for the Coalition for Smarter Growth. CSG is the leading organization in the Washington DC region dedicated to making the case for smart growth, with over 3,000 supporters in Montgomery County and over 22,000 region wide.

Montgomery County and other jurisdictions in the Washington DC region are in the midst of a transformation from wholly auto-dependent development to the creation of networks of walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented centers and neighborhoods. County Executive Leggett, the Montgomery County Council, and the Planning Board have committed to this vision. To remain economically competitive, and achieve the county's sustainable vision, the county needs expanded transit service to reach beyond Metro and the Purple Line. The 81-mile Bus Rapid Transit system is much needed and should be implemented as soon as possible, beginning with the Phase I routes.

We believe the Task Force report makes a strong case for the economic value of transit to the county, for dedicated funding options, and for an Independent Transit Authority, which could design, build and operate the system and do so efficiently and effectively. We think the Council should take a hard look at the recommendations and commit to the funding and implementation steps needed to build this system in an expeditious manner.

By 2040 Montgomery County will have 20% more people, 40% more jobs, and 70% more congestion. As the Transit Task Force report makes clear, without a BRT system Montgomery County cannot remain economically competitive. New workers will choose to live in other nearby jurisdictions, and businesses seeking to retain the next generation workforce will be forced to relocate. The CEO of Marriott created a stir when he stated unequivocally that their next headquarters must be Metro accessible. Attracting top professional talent means creating transit-friendly environments.

The market for transit-oriented development in Montgomery is booming. According to a June 2015 report, the most successful office clusters in Montgomery County are located in transit accessible and walkable environments. Metropolitan areas ranking high for walkable places have a 38% higher GDP per capita than those ranking low. Development in areas like White Flint and the 355 North Corridor, depend upon the success of Bus Rapid Transit.

Additionally, driving is down and transit use is up. The County's own Mobility Assessment Report found that while the population increased by 100,000 people since 2002, driving in Montgomery County did not. This shows more and more citizens are looking for improved transportation choices. Commuters making the decision to take a train or a bus, instead of a car, save more than \$10,000 on average per year according to the American Public Transportation Association. A BRT System can take advantage of these shifting preferences and provide transportation options for all income levels.



Coalition for Smarter Growth

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The Task Forces Draft proposal builds a strong case for the role an ITA can play in building a BRT system sooner. An ITA allows a new transit system to be built efficiently, by an agency whose sole focus is creating a successful system. The ITA also ensures a future system has a dedicated funding source and taxpayers can know where their money is going. The report includes recommendations for Council oversight over appointments, finances and eminent domain. We urge the County Council and County Executive Leggett to carefully consider the creation of an ITA.

In recent weeks we have been talking to residents and transit riders. I have personally spoken to dozens of citizens---from working mothers commuting up and down the Rt. 29 corridor to young professionals going from Silver Spring to Bethesda. They all say the same thing "We need BRT". We have collected over 500 signatures on a petition in support of the BRT.

The TTF report is a strong starting point for making the BRT system a reality, and showcasing the promise a future system holds. Montgomery County has a history of leading the way on progressive issues, from its renowned MPDU program, to the Agricultural Reserve. The time is now to make transit investments, the longer we wait the more expensive increasing transit options will become. We ask that policy makers remember this history and ensure that we build a BRT system. Thank you for your time and letting me speak here tonight.

TESTIMONY OF
RICHARD O. LEVINE
PRESIDENT, LOCUST HILL CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE
COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S TRANSIT TASK FORCE
REGARDING THE TASK FORCE PUBLIC DRAFT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

September 30, 2015

Chair Winston and members of the Task Force:

Locust Hill is a community of single-family households on the east side of Rockville Pike immediately inside the Beltway. We note the Task Force's recommendations to increase oversight of the ITA's budget and procurement activities and set limits on the tax rates the ITA may adopt. While these are steps in the right direction, we continue to oppose legislation to establish a multimember authority outside the County's Executive Branch.

Most fundamentally, the Task Force *assumes* that ITA legislation is needed to begin the financing *in the near term* of a BRT system that costs well over a billion dollars in right-of-way improvements, *before* any alternatives analyses have been undertaken. The recommendations thus omit a process to ensure that the nature and timing of major transit expenditures among all modes incorporate the most cost-beneficial and least intrusive solutions.

As the president of a citizens' association, I can assure you that, as reluctant as residents are to support tax increases, *there is no support whatever* for passage in the next General Assembly of legislation authorizing an independent transit agency with taxing, condemnation, and bond issuance powers—prior to completion of alternatives analyses of the best use of any new tax dollars.

As a member of the Route 355 South Corridor Advisory Committee, I note that no cost/benefit mechanism exists to evaluate overall BRT route prioritization and construction timing. Moreover, the current BRT study process uses forecasts of essentially unknowable conditions in 2040 that do not appear to take into account changing patterns in the location of new job growth in the County and clearly emerging trends in telecommuting, the vehicle sharing

economy, and intelligent vehicle and roadway technologies. Forecasts that may have been within the bounds of reason when made just two years ago may be implausible based on what we know today.

Consequently, no proposals for new transit taxes should be considered until a process is in place systematically to choose among possible transportation projects, to provide an opportunity to consider updated transit demand information as it unfolds, and to ensure that BRT outlays and decades of tax-supported debt service do not crowd out transportation spending that would have greater benefits per dollar spent.

* * *

Smart Growth starts with Smart Transit. A rush to establish an ITA whose key purpose is to raise taxes to support long term bonds to finance BRT—without any analysis of the benefits from competing uses of transit tax dollars—doesn't seem very smart to the residents of Locust Hill.

Thank you for your consideration of Locust Hill's views.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

of Montgomery County, MD, Inc. for Barbara Ditzler

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**Testimony on the Public Draft of the Report of the Transit Task Force
Including on an Independent Transit Authority
September 30, 2015**

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the County Transit Task Force about the proposed Bus Rapid Transit system.

We completely endorse the need for and construction of a rapid transit system that augments and complements our current county transit.

We support an efficient transit system that is readily available to county residents to minimize (1) the time a trip takes as well as (2) the harmful effects of commuting on our environment. The system must –

- interconnect with safe pedestrian and bicycle access and
- be part of a network of possibilities for mobility around the county and beyond.

Connections with other jurisdictions. As we look at our commuting patterns, we ask that consideration be given to ways we can connect to --

- Howard County,
- Frederick County,
- the District of Columbia, and
- across the river to Virginia.

Is the Independent Transit Authority the best way to accomplish this? We don't have the answers but judge that efficient connections are essential.

Funding. We support local revenue sources that are equitable, convenient, certain, adequate, and diverse.

- A progressive income tax is a preferred source of revenue, followed by taxes on property, vehicles, and development -- as well as a fuel tax.
- We oppose a local sales tax as a potential source of revenue.

Every resident of Montgomery County will benefit from a rapid transit system whether actively using it or not -- just as every resident benefits from a good school system whether currently having students in the schools or not.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of Montgomery County, MD, Inc.

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Management of Transit Functions. It appears that much thought and planning has gone into accommodating a new transit system. The tables developed regarding these functions help to clarify positions and responsibilities for various tasks -- with ultimate authority mainly belonging to elected officials.

- Will citizens feel confident in their knowledge of the structure so concerns may be addressed appropriately?
- Will the system be streamlined enough to not be cumbersome?
- Will there be transparent communication among all functions?

Our county must serve all citizens and provide good mobility opportunities for them. Not everyone drives or owns a car. We support a new rapid transit service that is well integrated into citizens' needs and responsive to their concerns. Our environment benefits from fewer added emissions and less pollution when we have efficient transportation.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

Yours truly,

Linna Barnes, President



Montgomery County Group

Brian Ditzler

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Testimony on Montgomery County Transit Task Force Report

January 30, 2015

Sierra Club Montgomery County strongly supports development of a Rapid Transit System in Montgomery County that includes the building of protected bicycle lanes as soon as practical. Fortunately, the County Council, the County Executive and the Transit Task Force also agree on the need for at least phase one of a Rapid Transit System.

Unfortunately, the County Council and the County Executive don't appear to agree on the timing and best approach to fund, develop and operate the Rapid Transit System despite the very comprehensive draft report the Transit Task Force issued on how best to structure and potentially pay for a RT System.

Another major obstacle to overcome is that many residents are in denial on the need for a Rapid Transit System in our county, especially if their taxes need to be raised to help pay for even phase one of such a system.

Those who continue to question the need for a RT System need to explain how they would lessen the increasing congestion on our roads, and how they would maintain a safe, healthy and sustainable place to live and work as more and more people continue to move here.

Rapid Transit Systems have proven effective in jurisdictions across the U.S. and around the world. RTS will help address current and future congestion problems, reduce green house gas emissions, and can help create walkable, bicycle-friendly, mixed-use developments around transit hubs. RTS will provide the transportation needed to attract employers and the jobs they provide that otherwise will locate in surrounding jurisdictions. Transit is also needed for low and moderate income families without cars, and it is preferred by many millenials too.

Another major benefit of more transit is that it can reduce the number of cars on our roads, which would have a significant impact on the quality of the air we breathe. Emissions from motor vehicles not only are a major cause of climate change, they have been linked to respiratory and cardiovascular problems, immune system damage, as well as neurological, reproductive, developmental and other health problems.

Those who want to keep driving their cars can do so, but they likely will find it more pleasant and faster to take Rapid Transit when they travel on one of the road corridors that has a lane or two dedicated to Rapid Transit vehicles.

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We were pleased but not surprised to see that the cost-benefit analysis that was completed by the Sage Policy Group for the Transit Task Force found that the RTS is an affordable and desirable investment for the county.

Sierra Club Montgomery County believes an increase in the county's gasoline sales tax should definitely be one of the financing options considered, as well as possibly congestion pricing and even a per-mile road usage charge (as the state of Oregon is rolling out) in order to influence driver behavior while helping raise the necessary funds.

In summary, Sierra Club Montgomery County strongly supports development of a Rapid Transit System in our county, including the building of protected bike lanes, as soon as practical.

Testimony in Favor of ITA Legislation to Build *BusRapidTransit* in Montgomery County

Honorable Council Members:

My name is Tracey Johnstone and I live in Bethesda-Chevy Chase. More 'Bethesda' than 'Chevy Chase'. I ride transit. I drive my car. Both modes of transportation have become actively unpleasant in Montgomery County.

I would first like to note what 'BRT' means to me. One of the problems with BRT – and why I've sometimes opposed it in the past – is because it's been used by municipalities in a sort of 'bait and switch' with transit advocates and agencies. Like the 'Diana Ross is pregnant at age 71' rumors that were all over the Internet today, I don't fall for the BRT bait and switch. BRT is not Basil Romano and Tomato. It's not Bunny Rabbit Transit. It's 'Bus Rapid Transit' with the emphasis on 'rapid'. Here's what it is:

- ✓ Dedicated lanes / preferential signaling
- ✓ At grade boarding
- ✓ Pre-paid.

It's faster. The boarding process is faster. 'Fast' will encourage some people to choose to ride it. The current buses that are ensnared in traffic and have long stops as people pay their fare and haul bungie carts and strollers up the steps try many people's patience. BRT would be different.

What it isn't:

- ✓ Better bus service
- ✓ Bus service with shorter headways

The gravity of the transit situation in Montgomery County is why I am here, today. I am a veteran of the Z bus service up Route 29. And, just as I find myself to be trapped on a remote island of Bethesda during rush hour, that entrapment includes Rt. 29.

Rt. 29 is straight as an arrow and most of it has a substantial-sized median. It's a natural for transit alternatives and improvements.

I will also advocate that these buses go all the way to Columbia Mall. Traffic between Columbia and Silver Spring is heavy and it would make life better not just for those who use transit, but would encourage more people to ride transit when they see the buses not stuck in traffic. It would improve the commutes of those who drive by taking some cars off the road. It's a win-win-win.

For similar reasons I've been won over to the installation of BRT on 355 to take pressure of the Red Line and I-270. The suburban sprawl that has been constructed along Rt. 27 is horrifying – we need transit alternatives and we need them NOW. And it can be done in the near term. I urge you to support this legislation.

Tracey A. Johnstone
4709 Bradley Blvd. #312
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Tracey.Johnstone@alumni.utoronto.ca

My name is Stephen Miller and I have been a resident of Montgomery County since 1960 and lived in Windermere since 1980. I represent "North Bethesda Neighborhoods"; I am an officer of the Heritage Walk HOA and a member of the Luxmanor Citizen's Association. Transportation is a major issue in the County. However, the proposed BRT is not an economic or practical solution to the problem. **According to BRT experts, MC does NOT now have now or will it ever have anything even remotely close to the minimum population and housing unit density criteria that would justify a BRT system. (See attachments).** It does not have the general support of the county as the population has little information on how it will work, but more important, **how it will be funded.** It does not take into account changes in work demographics and why County residents have chosen to live in MC.

We have had a Ride-On system that has not worked effectively so why will a more extensive system work any better? We have major intersections that slow down traffic whereas a BRT requires high speeds that are incompatible with existing traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. We have light signals that have not been synchronized to allow for movement of traffic and are not sensitive to the needs at different times of the day. Projected routes are taking people between existing Metro stops, **do not go into DC** and will take up lanes desperately needed for vehicles. **Conventional buses are far less expensive** and have flexibility that a BRT lacks.

Unlike high density urban areas, our county is very spread out and residents will not use buses to go shopping or take buses to go to Metro. Our Ride-on system was designed to do this and does not work. Rush hour traffic is extremely congested and there are less costly solutions that can be used such as, express bus service, improvement in light cycling to permit cars to move more easily and new approaches such as Uber and Lyft that can move people around. Along Rockville Pike there are too many intersections for a dedicated route that would also limit access to commercial and residential ventures along that route and OGR would become more gridlock because of the dedicated lanes, creating more cut through traffic where possible. Left turns will be restricted along the proposed routes. In addition, plans call for removal of medians, which provide important pedestrian refuge. The proposed bus system would be dangerous and hostile to pedestrians who are already at risk when they cross these main streets

We live in a suburban environment, not an urban environment (except for possibly Downtown Bethesda, Silver Spring, Rockville and Friendship Heights). Through traffic from Frederick and Howard Counties adds to our congestion and I have not seen any studies to reflect the impact of this on our traffic. Studies that have been done show that commuting time will only be slightly improved by the proposed routes. Roads such as New Hampshire Avenue have not been discussed in any analysis and Olney has voted to eliminate itself from BRT use.

Our county has significant infrastructure expenses that will have to be incurred for roads, dangerous failing large high pressure PCCP water mains and sewers and a failing METRO system which is unreliable and constantly breaking down.

Money should be spent on continuing to make the county a better place to live, not a place that will be too expensive to live with falling home prices because of high taxes to pay for a BRT that is not used and does not serve the majority of its residents.

who has worked fifteen or more hours per week for forty or more weeks in the previous year. There are 196,301 such commuters in Detroit, or 0.53 per household. [6] If we define a bus stop's market as households within a half mile of the stop, then we would conclude from Table 1 that 800 regular commuters per stop would support conventional bus service, while 1,600 per stop would be required to support BRT. While this back-of-the-envelope calculation may help us visualize the densities involved, we point out below that density requirements apply to the entire corridor, not to individual stops.

Transit Mode	Minimum Density per Acre	
	Housing Units	Employees
Conventional Bus System	3 to 5	4
Bus Rapid Transit	6 to 7	5 to 6
Light Rail	8 or more	7 or more

Source: Tindale-Oliver & Associates, Inc.

At the time of this writing, we did not have employment numbers for the Detroit region, but in Map 2 we have classified areas according to which mode of transit their population densities would support.

Housing
M.C. is 1.5 per Acre after
allowing for 93,000 in Agricultural
Reserve (total ~ 344,480 Acres)
231,480 Net
Employment (Non Agricultural)
Employment - 419,956
1.8 per Acre
2.5 per Acre (20 years)

A new Rapid Transit network will help solve Montgomery's traffic woes

Rapid Transit, often compared to light rail on rubber tires, is our best, most affordable alternative to rising congestion.

Frequent, reliable service: every 5-10 minutes.

Fares are paid before boarding through all doors

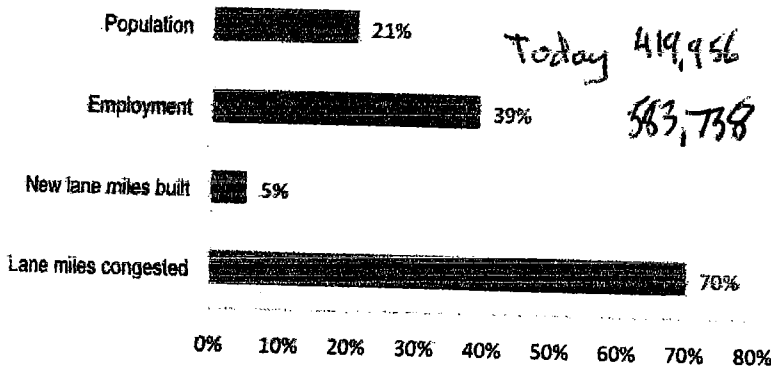
Dedicated lanes to bypass traffic

Clean, permanent stations with realtime arrival info

The worst traffic, and getting worse.

Our region has the worst traffic in the nation and it's getting worse. Traffic is projected to increase by 50% by 2040.

Growth between now and 2040



Montgomery County is the only jurisdiction in the nation that has not approved a transit plan for the next 20 years. This is a critical failure of leadership that will result in even more congestion, higher costs, and a lower quality of life for our residents.

Montgomery County lacks the ridership to justify building a proposed \$1.8 billion, 160-mile rapid bus system, according to a study requested by the county's Department of Transportation.

A panel commissioned by County Executive Ike Leggett recommended a "world class" bus rapid transit, or BRT, system that would run in dedicated lanes and resemble light rail. The system, which the panel recommended paying for with property tax increases of up to 15 percent, has been enthusiastically endorsed by elected officials like Council President Roger Berliner, D-Bethesda, and Councilman Marc Elrich, D-at large.

But Montgomery County may not need such a gold-standard system, according to the preliminary findings of the International Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, or ITDP.

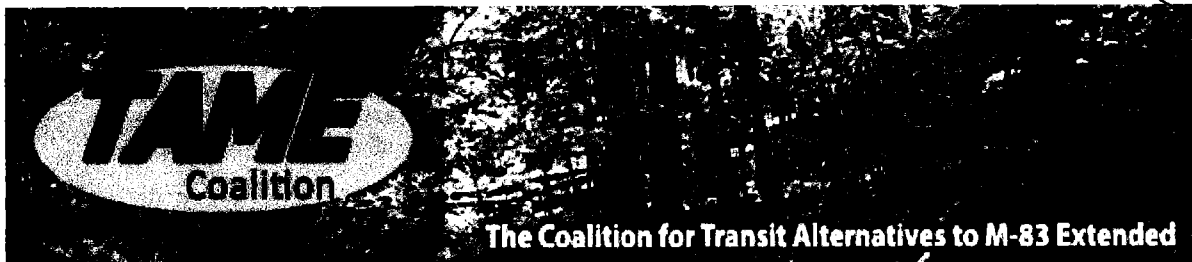
Bus rapid transit ridership

Location	Passengers per hour per direction
Bogota, Colombia	45,000
Sao Paulo	35,000
Porto Alegre, Brazil	28,000
Curitiba, Brazil	10,500
Mexico City	11,000
Pittsburgh	5,000
Rouen, France	1,700
Montgomery County:	
Colesville Road	800
Veirs Mill Road	280
Rockville Pike	250
Georgia Avenue	200

Of the nearly 20 bus routes proposed, the four likely to have the highest ridership -- Colesville Road, Veirs Mill Road, Rockville Pike and Georgia Avenue -- would still have significantly fewer riders than one of the smallest BRT systems in the world, the study determined.

Colesville Road is predicted to have the highest ridership of these routes, but even there, most of the trips would likely be riders passing through on their way to the Silver Spring Metro station, with few riders getting on and off along the way. As a result, the ITDP recommends "lighter improvements to the existing bus system, such as a dedicated lane, but not necessarily all of the other elements that go along with gold-standard BRT."

Rockville Pike "appears to us to be the best place to start building a gold-standard BRT," the study found, since the route would travel through more urban areas like downtown Rockville and Bethesda and the



Supporting A New Independent Transit Authority

To: Transit Task Force

My name is Margaret Schoap, and I am speaking on behalf of the TAME Coalition, who collaborates with citizens and government to secure Transit Alternatives for Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME).

The TAME Coalition supports allowing Montgomery County to create a single-focused independent transit authority to perform county transit functions. We whole-heartedly embrace the County's new Rapid Transit System, the Corridor Cities Transitways route, and our existing Ride-On bus operation. Each of these transit systems must be grounded with reliable and dedicated financial sources for their successful longevity.

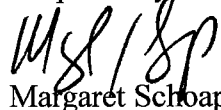
Montgomery County will not be able to build new and expanded transportation systems by relying on our County's budget, alone. TAME Coalition supports creating an Independent Transit Authority *now*, rather than later.

The TAME Coalition supports four key fundamentals for an effective ITA:

- Implement first-round RTS routes in (hopefully) five years
- Determine revenue sources that are predictable and dedicated
- Distribute the cost equally and fairly to county citizens and transit riders
- Be accountable to the public

You are an important group that can ensure transit is built and will flourish in Montgomery County. We ask you to pledge your support for an independent transit authority.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M. Schoap".

Margaret Schoap

11425 Neelsville Church Rd, Germantown, MD 20876

Organizer for **Coalition for Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME)**

tamecoalition@gmail.com

<http://www.tamecoalition.org/>

240-581-0518

Gordie Brenne, VP Montgomery County Taxpayers League

My name is Gordie Brenne, and I'm VP of the Montgomery County Taxpayers League. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Hopefully our comments will help as you finalize the report and think through enabling legislation questions.

Most importantly, we favor economic development over tax increases to pay for transportation solutions. Therefore, the Taxpayers League remains skeptical about the report's recommendations to combine economic development that benefits the state the most (NPV \$12.7B) with higher local taxes. The state is given only a small role in financing ITA transit investments. We were pleased to see a roll-back of the ITAs scope and scale. We are also pleased to see Council oversight expanded to include the operating budget (similar to WSSC oversight). Establishing a state infrastructure bank to finance the projects could eliminate the need for an ITA. In addition to giving the state a major financing role, this would reduce interest rate risks, and significantly reduce debt service costs to help keep property taxes within the charter limit. An independent validation of project costs and benefits, and an Independent Board consisting of transportation specialists would also help.

Taxes- Of course, tax increases concern us, especially on top of already expected increases to address income tax revenue shortfalls. Not only would this adversely impact on our residents, but economic development would be hurt by additions to some of the highest taxes in the nation. Planned operations seem overly dependent on tax subsidies from state and Federal sources that may not be sustainable, exacerbating "going concern" issues in the event of an economic downturn. Also, we insist that any transfer of current costs from the DOT to the new ITA be accompanied by a proportionate property tax credit on each taxpayer's bill, to avoid using the ITA as an ATM for repurposing current tax revenues.

(The report seems to acknowledge that fares plus property tax increases will not cover operating costs (\$63M), and calls for \$40M in state and Federal payments (pg. 54). Are those revenues sustainable? Also, baseline operating costs should not grow faster than the annual rate of inflation to maintain efficiency and manage tax increases).

Borrowing Costs – There is a significant interest rate risk if the market downgrades ITA bonds and/or interest rates climb. Contrary to the report's glib logic (pg. 41), the ITAs borrowing costs will likely be significantly higher than the county's (1 percentage point), and higher still than the state's (at least 2 percentage points). If we negotiate with the state to establish an infrastructure bank and obtain loans, the state could help us manage interest rate risks, and the ITA could have a smaller Treasury function. If this debt is structured, enhanced, and subordinated, we might be able to limit the leverage on the county's books while implementing BRT within the existing DOT, avoiding the ITA altogether and saving lots of money. Lastly, there should also be an affordability limit on debt service costs as a percentage of operating revenues, consistent with the county's affordability policy.

Thank you for considering these issues.

(WSSC rates are a good benchmark for ITA rates- currently 4-4.25% for construction bonds. Maryland affordability limits won't be reached by adding WSSC debt. Maryland law limits the amount of bonds and notes WSSC (and we presume the ITA) may have outstanding at any time. This limitation is generally based on legislated percentages of the real property assessable tax base and personal property and operating real property assessments within the Washington Suburban Sanitary District. As of June 30, 2014, the calculated limit was \$9.197B- WSSC Annual Report 2014. WSSC's outstanding debt was significantly below those limits, even when combined with County. But, adding ITA with higher construction costs than projected could exceed the limit, after subtracting PG County's portion of the tax base. Lastly, WSSC has an affordability limit of around 20% of operating budget for debt service. According to Appendix 6 the ITA starts close to this level but within a few years doubles and balloons to 50% by 2046).

Testimony Before the
Montgomery County Transit Task Force
Sept 30, 2015

I am Dave Drake, Chair of the Republican Party of Legislative District 15 and a lifelong resident of Montgomery County. We represent some 20,000 registered voters in western Montgomery County.

We are strongly opposed the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System as proposed and the Independent Transportation Authority (ITA).

In the last eight years the county has spent 70% of available transportation funds on mass transit, allowing the I-270 Corridor to become the one of the most congested in the nation. We believe had we cooperated with Virginia on our interstates in a program to match their improvements, combine that with the federal grant funded 11 mile Rockville Pike Ride on Bus Improvements Project (ROP) makes far more sense than the \$2.25B BRT.

Montgomery County engaged the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy in 2012 to conduct Market Study which basically concluded that the proposed 2.25 Billion Dollar BRT was a Rolls Royce solution for a Morris Minor need. They further stated:

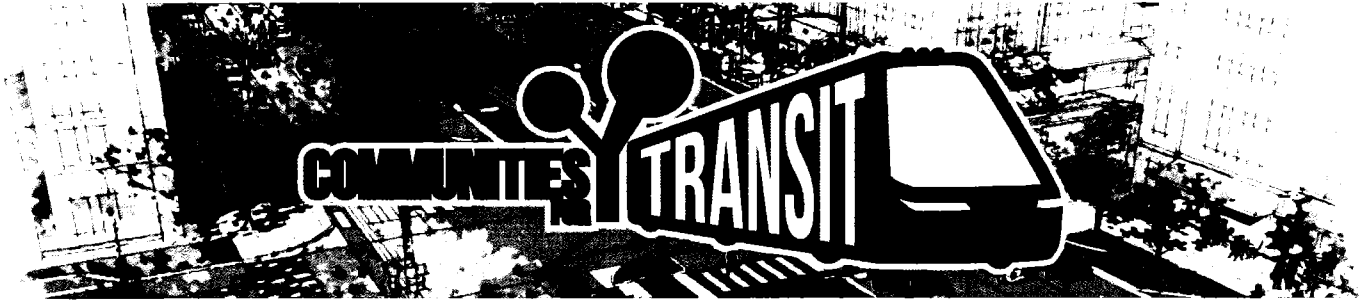
" Montgomery County has limited experience with managing projects of this scope, scale, and complexity. Developing even one BRT corridor will be an administrative challenge in Montgomery County, let alone an attempt to develop and deliver multiple corridors simultaneously; a task no other municipality has ever attempted."

Think Silver Spring Transit Center at \$50M versus \$2.25B BRT

As for the argument that bypassing limits on property tax increases because the referendum that imposed those limits was held 7 years ago is absurd. But if the present executive wants to scrap the limits then put it on the ballot and let the voters who imposed the limits repeal them. As for the ITA as an instrument for funding. It contains the same onerous problems it did originally virtually still unconstrained eminent domain, bonding, taxing authority.

According to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, Maryland ranks 40th in the nation for its business tax climate and 41st for its property taxes. The County Executive has already declared that we can expect a 10% property tax increase as a result of a Supreme Court decision and still he wants to raise even more taxes for his ill-considered transit schemes.

This is a true picture of "one party rule" out of control.



Members of the Task Force,
My name is Geri Rosenberg from Communities for Transit, and I live in Silver Spring.

The RTS is a major investment. We all recognize that. As we address existing transportation problems, we also need to find ways to accommodate economic growth to support the future of our communities. If we can create additional transportation capacity, it's projected that we will add 20% more residents--that's 200,000 people--and 40% more jobs in the next 20 years. Since developing infrastructure takes time, we need to get a meaningful start on that sooner rather than later.

If we cannot do this, more people and jobs will be located outside of the county, resulting in more and more people driving through the county to other destinations, costing the county more and more money without the benefits of having the jobs within the county. Doing nothing is not a good alternative--there are real costs associated with it--not to mention the projected 70% increase in congestion over the next quarter century.

Investing in many miles of new roads in the County is not a feasible alternative and would not ultimately solve the problem of traffic congestion. It would disrupt communities and cost many billions of dollars--more than the entire RTS network. It would not address the needs of 23% of people living on the Veirs Mill corridor who rely on transit to commute, or the thousands of county residents who cannot drive due to age, disability, or lack of funds. Our current transit network does not meet their needs. Nor will it attract and retain younger residents like me and my roommates who want to live and work in places with easy transit access. The RTS is our best investment option.

Without an innovative solution like the quasi-independent transit authority, we can guarantee that the RTS will be developed at an incredibly slow pace and, therefore, at a far more expensive price. We cannot even begin to solve our transportation problems and implement our adopted strategies for economic growth without a cost-effective solution, and the RTS network and proposed transit authority are the best ways to accomplish that.

Just as all county residents financially support public education even if they don't use it, all residents should support our transportation network. A strong public education system is important to all residents--and we have decided that we all benefit from it, just as we will benefit from the proposed RTS--whether we all ride it or not.

The best financing option relies on a combination of different sources, including local, state and federal support, so as not to overburden any one group and to utilize the broadest possible base.

I appreciate the time the Transit Task Force has spent working and presenting its Public Draft Report--and I thank you for listening to the public and suggesting improvements to the proposal relating to tax caps, greater accountability, and labor issues. Montgomery County needs to develop the RTS as quickly and efficiently as we can. Thank you.

September 30, 2015

Testimony of

Celesta Jurkovich

For

Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association

And

Citizens Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights

Before

Montgomery County's 2015 Transit Task Force

I am Celesta Jurkovich, representing the Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association and the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, an umbrella organization for 19 communities with over 12,000 residents. A 30-year County resident, I'm a regular transit user, a member of the 355 South BRT Corridor Advisory Committee, and consistent observer of the multiple County efforts to create a new bus rapid transit system.

I've attended more than 20 Transit Task Force meetings. The TTF report recommendation that creation of an ITA is the best way to improve the County's transit needs is both premature and ill timed. Here's why:

- It attempts to justify a multi-billion dollar taxpayer-funded investment in a BRT network conceived 5 years ago, with little regard for recent transportation innovations or the current state of County finances. The description of generals fighting the last war comes to mind.
- It fails to accept that while ITA debt may be characterized as "independent" by using an accounting gimmick, it is still the responsibility of County residents whose referendum imposing a cap on real property taxes will be violated. The same residents whose taxes currently underwrite 76.7% of the County budget will now also pay the bulk of an estimated \$2.2 billion in new Phase 1 BRT capital costs and over \$80 million annually in operating costs for 48 miles of BRT routes. Although the Task Force can choose to ignore that unpleasant reality, it cannot magically create new taxpayers to foot this sizeable bill.

- Designs for the BRT routes are far from complete, so TTF cost estimates are extremely uncertain. Corridor Advisory Committees (CACs) have not even seen possible alternatives for implementation on corridors which they as stakeholders are responsible for evaluating. Yet selection of an appropriate alternative is a key cost determinant.
- The Task Force never looked at implications for congestion if traffic lanes are re-purposed as originally recommended in the County's Functional Master Plan. County drivers who may live and work in different jurisdictions are unlikely to be BRT riders. Those potential users will only be reached by a regional, not local, network. Nor are the people who must make multi-stop trips to accomplish routine tasks like school pickups, sports practice, grocery shopping, etc. The Task Force did not gather data about this so they don't know if they are, in effect, creating a "family driver" tax.

The Task Force has failed to make its case to the public that this network is needed at this time, especially in light of competing government needs and belt-tightening requirements, and that it will have a positive impact on traffic congestion in Montgomery County.

With the emphasis on transit in today's world, my guess is that a well-planned, community-supported transit line would have a good chance of receiving state and federal funding. And we have a fully functional Transportation Department and transit system already.

So why does Montgomery County need an Independent Transit Authority that can fund unsupported transit lines by going over the tax cap...one reason is the poorly planned Corridor Cities Transitway with its long convoluted alignment that is unlikely to attract riders.

Montgomery County is hell-bent on building the CCT because, I suspect, it may be part of the support required by the deal cooked up by Johns Hopkins and Montgomery County back in the 1980's when they put together their plan to snooker Elizabeth Banks out of her family's land called Belward Farm. Johns Hopkins has no plans to build the academic campus on Belward, despite repeated promises to Ms. Banks. Ms. Banks was adamant that she did not want commercial development on her farm but soon after her death, the county at the request of Johns Hopkins rezoned the property for a commercial office complex for 15,000 people.

Belward Farm is adjacent to four established residential neighborhoods and is 5 miles from the nearest Metro Station so Hopkins needs a marketing tool to try to entice companies to lease property on Belward Farm...thus far without success. Hence, the urgency for construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway. Apparently the InterCounty Connector (ICC) was not enough and the University still has its hand out.

State and county officials have said, in private, that nobody is expected to ride the CCT. A gentleman from the Clarksburg Chamber of Commerce said that the people of Clarksburg won't ride it. The CEO of Medimmune declined to have a CCT station or a pedestrian bridge because his employees said they prefer to drive. With minimal or no parking at the stations, we've been told the CCT is not being built for commuters, aka the residents.

This billion dollar boondoggle is simply a very expensive marketing tool for Johns Hopkins which is a very well-funded organization. The University can well-afford to fund its own shuttle just like many corporations and universities instead of expecting the taxpayers of Montgomery County to foot the bill. And, if Hopkins steps up to fund their own shuttle, an independent transit authority would probably not be necessary.

Donna Baron

Coordinator, The Gaithersburg – North Potomac – Rockville Coalition, online at www.scale-it-back.com

Friends of White Flint

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PO Box 2761
White Flint Station
Kensington, MD 20891
info@whiteflint.org
www.whiteflint.org

My name is Amy Ginsburg, and I am the Executive Director of Friends of White Flint, a nonprofit organization with nearly 1,300 supporters, including residents, businesses, homeowners associations, and property owners. Our only mission is to ensure the full implementation of the White Flint Sector Plan so that the promise of a walkable, transit-oriented, smart-growth community is achieved in the Pike District.

A Rapid Transit System is critical to creating an energetic, prosperous community in the Pike District. RTS is indispensable for improving the quality of life for a growing population and to attracting businesses and retailers to the Pike District. In fact, 7,400 residential units in both the White Flint 1 and White Flint 2 sectors are linked to developing an RTS along Route 355.

We need to provide Montgomery County with the ability to efficiently and quickly create the kind of walkable, transit-friendly community so important to our future. Just as bread needs a baker, RTS needs a Transit Authority which we believe is a strong option for managing this complex system.

Moving forward with RTS is vital for both the County and the White Flint area. Many employees and residents, especially millennials, want to ditch their cars; RTS will enable many of them to do just that. Traffic doesn't attract business to Montgomery County; transit options and walkable communities like the Pike District do. Creating jobs is the key to enabling Montgomery County to remain competitive and sustainable in the future. RTS is key to attracting those businesses and creating those jobs. In fact, studies have shown that after factoring in the cost of RTS, the County will net \$871 million in revenue over twenty-five years.

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There are many thorny issues to work out, including funding, but I urge Montgomery County government to make rapid transit on Rockville Pike a top priority. We believe that Bus Rapid Transit on Route 355 should be the first line. A successful Rockville Pike line will demonstrate how RTS can have a positive impact in a highly visible manner. Fortunately, the White Flint area has the density, commercial development, and support to be a successful pilot. Such a pilot program on Route 355 will make it easy to see a Rapid Transit System creating a vibrant, thriving community.

From all of us at Friends of White Flint, thank you for your continued support of transit and the White Flint Sector Plan.

Cherrywood Homeowners Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 159

Olney, Maryland 20830

September 30, 2015

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Transit Task Force Public Comments

The Cherrywood Homeowners Association is a 606-unit HOA located in the Olney area of Montgomery County. I am here to voice our community opposition to the independent transit/taxing authority. In addition to being an end run around the County Charter limits on taxes, it is putting the cart before the horse in terms of financing an exorbitant bus replacement theory (BRT) that no community at large has fully endorsed. In Olney, the plan was soundly rejected when we learned that more than 75% of the businesses along the route in Olney would have been displaced. Transit enthusiasts talk about the BRT mistakes made in Olney that were essentially that the State marked the businesses that would be displaced with a red X on their drawing. This devastation was NOT posted on-line and if not for one citizen who photographed the map, the Olney BRT could be near construction. This should be a warning to businesses that are currently located along other BRT routes – insist to see the hidden displacement plans. It is quite clear that the BRT is more of a redevelopment plan than a transit plan. One only needs to read the Executive Summary of the Sage report (appendix 8 to the TTF report) to learn that 70% of the housing potential and 65% of the commercial potential are clearly reasonably linked to BRT. It is a bonanza for the developers with the County taxpayers footing the bill and held responsible for the debt hidden from the bond agencies.

This TTF report could be a good script for a crime movie. You have a County that has spent up to their legal limit and run up debt to their legal limit. How do solve the problem? You create a shell game with a parallel shadow government agency where you handpick five stooges to carry out your desires while hiding the debt in a quasi government agency with the poor taxpayers holding the bag for all the bad decisions. Page 22 specifically states that the ITA is “important in order to prevent debt incurred by the transit authority from being considered as County debt by County auditors, bond rating agencies, and other fiscal oversight bodies.” In short, the County plans to hide debt in the ITA and leave the property taxpayers holding the bag. It is hard to imagine that this is even legal or that the debt overseers are that stupid!

Three years ago the Executive commissioned the ITDP report on BRT. This expert consultant group reported a lack of need for BRT and recommended that the County build one corridor where the need was the highest to show proof of concept. We would argue that the County should follow that advice and finance the plan in the usual way without a duplicative parallel shell agency. Developers benefiting from the BRT should pay an increased impact tax to support this effort. Other than this the County should revolutionize their bus system like was done in Houston for only a million dollars rather than several billion. Eliminating left turns on Rockville Pike to build a slow speed, at-grade duplicative bus system adjacent to a high-speed underground metro system makes no sense to most prudent people.

I would like to end with a quote from page 46 of the TTF report. "It is essential that debt incurred to implement the RTS not be carried on the County's balance sheet. If the debt were to be carried on the County's balance sheet, it would be subject to the County Charter, debt affordability limits, and other technical requirements relating to the debt." In short, the purpose of the ITA is to skirt the law and hide the debt. This leaves many County residents with a clear indication that deception is the center point of the County's ITA/BRT process. We oppose the ITA plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul F. Jarosinski".

Paul F. Jarosinski
President

**Testimony to the Transit Task Force Public Forum on September 30, 2015
By David Winstead, Esq. on behalf of The White Flint Partnership**

The White Flint Partnership is a consortium of property owners (Saul Center, Inc., Federal Realty Investment Trust, Gables Residential, the JBG Companies, Lerner Enterprises and The Tower Companies) in the White Flint Sector Plan area, who together with the residents and businesses, are committed to efforts to see the Rapid Transit Vehicle system implemented in a timely manner.

I am David Winstead, and have had the pleasure of working with the White Flint Partnership in support of the Rapid Transit Vehicle system which is being recommended by this Task Force, and which has been adopted by the County Council in its approval of the County's Transit Master Plan.

As a former Maryland Transportation Secretary, it is exciting to recognize the potential of a modern cost-effective Rapid Transit Vehicle (RTV) system connecting the residents, workers, federal campuses and communities along the Phase 1 corridors of the proposed RTV system. The White Flint sector, with its desirable amenities and ultimate build-out generating 39,000 new jobs, will provide a model urban RTV system for the National Capital Region and the country as a whole.

At a September 21st 2015 forum on this RTV project sponsored by the White Flint Partnership, top officials of the Federal Transportation Administration and Maryland DOT, together with federal campus directors from NIH, HHS, Navy Medical, NCI and the FDA, recognized the enormous benefit that this system would provide to federal employees, who represent 1 in every 10 jobs in the Montgomery County. Thus, what your Task Force has laid out in its recommendations, reflects an extraordinary public-private transportation partnership, which will involve pairing county, state and federal funds.

Property owners in White Flint are already subject to a special tax that will ultimately generate approximately \$169 million to pay for transportation and transit infrastructure needs in the White Flint sector, including infrastructure to help implement the 355 South RTS segment through the sector. This investment will insure the full implementation of the White Flint Sector Plan with walkable, transit-oriented,

smart-growth communities throughout the Pike District and along Maryland 355 South.

RTS is critical to expanding the tax base and improving the quality of life for a growing population (Montgomery County has 17 % of the population and job growth for the entire State of Maryland), as well as attracting businesses and retailers to the Pike District and county. One Task Force recommendation for RTS is that it needs an Independent Transit Authority structure which can provide innovative financing, and public-private delivery mechanisms, for building and operation the system. The White Flint Partnership supports this organizational concept, and we will work with the County and its officials as they consider and implement this strategic approach. The Partnership, however, still has concerns about the funding alternatives in the Task Force Report, so we are not ready to support that aspect of the Task Force's recommendations at this time. For example, we are concerned about the proposed alternative for an excise tax on a subset of commercial properties to fund RTS development and operations. In any event, we would need confirmation that our White Flint properties would not be subject to any of these additional taxes for transit, because our properties already pay a special tax for infrastructure improvements. With the SHA Corridor Studies underway, a realistic and appropriate financing plan for the Rapid Transit System must be one of the next critical steps. A number of options for financial support are now before the County/State transportation officials and elected officials. Going forward, we will work with those officials to sort through the options, and any others that may be appropriate, to arrive at a funding mechanism that all stakeholders can get behind.

The Transit Task Force has done an outstanding job researching and discussing options for creating a Rapid Transit System for the county. This is a complex project, but the White Flint Partnership will continue to work with the County and State to see that engineering funding is committed to provide a model RTV System along Md. 355 South in the near term.

Thank you for your hard work and continued support in this endeavor.

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Testimony by Robert Nelson
at the Transit Task Force Public Forum
September 30, 2015

The Transit Task Force has made a fine effort at developing a plan for expanding the network of public transportation in Montgomery County. But as a resident of the upcounty, I see very little benefit to our area and a massive diversion of capital funding that should be allocated to long-deferred highway projects such as the completion of the partially built Mid-County Highway to connect with Snowden Farm Parkway and Clarksburg. The travel time on the CCT from Clarksburg to Shady Grove Metro is twice what it would take on the M-83 Master Plan Route. The estimated cost of the nine-mile Phase 1 of the CCT is twice that of completing M-83 on the Master Plan Route.

The goal for Montgomery County should be to decrease overall congestion so that a very expensive RTS network is no longer necessary. Certainly the use of telecommuting can reduce the number of business-related trips. Technologies should be immediately implemented on the current bus network such as speeding fare collection with electronically interactive customer payment systems, providing real-time route information, and giving priority of traffic signalization. The implementation of ramp metering in other states has improved traffic flow and safety by 25%. More dynamic algorithms to control traffic signals and active lane signalization as recently implemented in Virginia can greatly improve the movement of traffic. Why has very cost-effective available technology not been implemented first before considering a proposal

that significantly increases the debt load and yearly operating costs for Montgomery County? Public-private partnerships (P³) are very successfully utilized elsewhere, but why were they rejected for RTS Phase 1? I didn't see any reference to the Transit Task Force integrating ridesharing into transit services or discussing some privatization options as has been done in jurisdictions around the country. Could commercial companies like Uber, Lyft, Bridj and Leap Transit offer efficient, on-demand bus transportation services for customers with resources, rather than burdening taxpayers with an RTS that promises only a 25% fare box recovery rate? More jobs are located in Montgomery County than in any other jurisdiction in Maryland, yet the Transit Task Force report states that "Montgomery County will absorb a larger portion of the cost of this infrastructure program than is typical (on state highways)."

Already we have over 50% more people using public transportation than Fairfax County (15% of the population of Montgomery County versus 9% in Fairfax) and technological improvements to the current transportation network should boost ridership even more. I urge you to take action now to reduce overall traffic congestion with available technology on all bus routes and to accelerate the completion of multi-decade delayed highway improvements so that all residents of Montgomery County may benefit from the expenditure of their tax dollars.

Robert Nelson

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Edna Miller
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September 30, 2015

Montgomery County Transit Task Force Hearing
Rockville, Maryland

Subject: I support establishing an Independent Transit Authority (ITA)

Hello,

I am Edna Miller a Connecticut native and thirteen-year Maryland resident who achieved 4 occupations before retiring. 'Transportation' became my focus, while retirement allowed for research & study of Transportation issues.

"Rapid Transit System" (RTS) features a modern large capacity low to the ground vehicle that carries passengers comfortably, quietly and quickly due to dedicated lanes and electric power.

An "Independent Transit Authority" (ITA) start-up to manage a Rapid Transit System requires a commitment to quality customer service. A credential of interest when selecting candidates for an "ITA", should possess Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) expertise, other Rapid Transit business experience and Smarter Growth knowledge.

In order for ITA to secure financing for an RTS or Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) they must attract big investors, therefore an (cost versus profit) independent business approach is certain. Starting an ITA business model demands an economic heart separated from County Budget variations & Political differences.

To move population growth in the right direction ITA must deliver a superior Rapid Transit System that supports residential desirability and economic viability. Creating dedicated RTS lanes on "355 North and 355 South" would reinforce fast rapid transit service.

When ITA establishes an affordable high-speed, high quality and safe Rapid Transit System many will come to rely on the service. Volume ridership should significantly reduce congested roads. This means air, water and our quality of life can be significantly improved.

During a 2015 Transportation Forum¹ in Virginia, people came from Maryland, Virginia and DC to hear eight speakers on future of Transit and Transit Crossing Boundaries.

ITA will need to review and decide if a crossing boundaries concept is right for their Long-Range Plan. Someday ITA may want the Rapid Transit System connected to Purple Line, to Virginia Transit and Frederick County Transit.

Thank you for considering my comments. I much appreciate your efforts to improve our quality of life and mobility in the County.



¹ League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area hosted the Transportation Forum on "Crossing Boundaries" on March 28, 2015 in Arlington, VA.

Submitted by: Richard (Dick) Jurgena Phone (301) 674-3451
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening. My name is Dick Jurgena and I live in Darnestown. I represent the 48 members of the Montgomery County Republican Central Committee. We were elected to represent the over 122 thousand Republicans in Montgomery County.

We are concerned the BRT is an effort to commit funds to later provide an excuse to promote the ITA, to which we are adamantly opposed. As I testified at the hearing before the Montgomery County State Legislators last spring, we don't believe there is enough lipstick in Montgomery County to make this Pig acceptable to county voters.

The last sentence of your conclusions demonstrate your intent very clearly. I quote, "The Task Force urges that its recommendations be adopted, that enabling legislation consistent herewith be introduced in and adopted by the General Assembly, and the County government invoke legislation and adopt implementing legislation to create and empower the transit authority consistent herewith." I am not an Arab; but, I can recognize a camel when it pokes its nose under the tent.

I believe our problem with our bus transportation system has not so much do with how fast our buses get from one point of their route to the other as it has to do with how, like most government systems, it is mismanaged.

As some of you may know, I spent a lot of time on street corners during my campaign for a seat on the county council. I was amazed at how many buses I saw on the road with 3 or 4 riders during rush hour and yes they were going with the rush hour traffic. According to the ITDP study, even the most promising proposed BRT route, the 355 route, has only a current ridership of 250 passengers per hour as opposed to the recommended minimum rate of 1200 passengers per hour to be successful.

I understand some of your members are already aware of the successes the city of Houston, TX, has had in improving its efficiency and ridership at no additional cost. I urge you to consider their solutions while keeping in mind the number of communities, who are scrapping their current BRT systems as failures.

Considering the findings of the ITDP study that show:

1. None of the proposed routes meet the minimum recommended current passengers per hour requirements;
2. Other less costly options exist;
3. An increase in ridership will be a long time coming;
4. The number of cities who are scrapping their BRT systems; and,
5. The potential increase in property taxes to pay for such a system,

I believe that as soon as the general public become more informed of these findings, those of you who support BRT, can look forward to a short ride out of town, on a public rail system, after a quick bath in tar and feathers.

Thank you for your attention.